

Singdarin

Colloquial Singaporean Mandarin, also known as **Singdarin** (simplified Chinese: 新加坡式华语; traditional Chinese: 新加坡式華語; pinyin: *Xīnjiāpōshì Huáyǔ*; Wade–Giles: *hsing¹ chia¹ p'o¹ shih⁴ hua² yü³*),^[1] is an interlanguage native to Singapore. In Taiwan, this language variety is known as **Singnese** (Chinese: 星式中文; pinyin: *Xīngshì Zhōngwén*; Wade–Giles: *hsing¹ shih⁴ chung¹ wen²*; lit.: 'Sing[apore] colloquial Chinese language').^[2] It is based on Mandarin but has a large amount of English in its vocabulary. For this reason, Singdarin is sometimes known as "Anglo-Chinese". There are also words from Malay and other Chinese languages.^[3]

In general, well-educated Chinese Singaporeans are able to code-switch between Singdarin and Standard Mandarin.

Singdarin grammar is usually identical to Chinese. In some circumstances, there is code-switching with English. Singdarin vocabulary consists of a large number of words from English, Hokkien and Malay, among other languages, often when speakers do not know the Mandarin equivalent of what they wish to express, and instead use English words to convey the meaning.

It is almost identical to the Colloquial Malaysian Mandarin spoken in Malaysia, while native Chinese from China or native Taiwanese from Taiwan generally find it difficult to understand Singdarin due to large number of English or non-Mandarin words used. The Singaporean government currently discourages the use of Singdarin in favour of Standard Singaporean Mandarin as it believes in the need for Singaporeans to be able to communicate effectively with native Chinese from China or Taiwan.

Singdarin	
 <div>Singnese</div>	
Region	Singapore
<div>Native speakers</div>	No statistics yet
<div>Language family</div>	<div>Sino-Tibetan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sinitic<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mandarin<ul style="list-style-type: none">Singdarin</div>
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	<i>None</i> (mis)
Glottolog	<i>None</i>

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Origins

Like its Singlish equivalent, Singdarin evolved because many Singaporean Chinese families come from mixed language environments. For instance, children may be raised in households in which one parent speaks English while the other speaks Chinese or coming for other Chinese dialects, such as Hokkien or Cantonese respectively.

Singdarin has also evolved largely because Singapore is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual society. One of the most important policies of the Singaporean government is to ensure social and multi-ethnic harmony. Therefore, instead of letting certain ethnic groups to live in an isolated community like they did in the past, the Singapore government encourages the majority of Singaporeans to live in HDB flats that have now become a melting pot of Chinese, Malays, Indians and other different ethnicity who speak different languages. This is believed to reduce differences between the diverse linguistic and ethnic groups in Singapore.

As the majority of Singaporeans live in HDB flats, which have families coming from various linguistic, racial and ethnic background, there is a tendency for different languages to be mixed in order to facilitate more effective communication between the different races. In short, it leads to the creation of a hybrid culture (known colloquially as a "rojak" culture).

This and the tendency for the Singaporean Chinese people to use the mixed language that they use at home in daily colloquial conversation has since influenced the Mandarin spoken in schools, resulting in "Singdarin" being formed. It was in this environment that Singdarin developed.

Examples of Singdarin (Anglo-Chinese) dialogue

Below are some examples of Singdarin dialogue spoken amongst some Chinese Singaporeans.

Singdarin (Anglo-Chinese) dialogue	English translation	Standard Mandarin
<small>nǐde zài nǎlǐ</small> 你的 office 在哪里？	Where is your office?	您的办公室在哪里？
<small>Raffles Place, hěn kàojìn MRT.¹</small> <u>Raffles Place</u> , 很靠近 MRT. ¹	Raffles Place, located near the MRT station.	莱佛士坊，在地铁站附近/离地铁站不远
<small>nǐ zài nàbiān zuò duōjiǔ le</small> 你 在那边 做 多久了？	How long have you been working there?	你在那里工作多久了？
<small>bù tài jiǔ</small> Six months. <small>wǒ xiǎng</small> 我 想 find another job.	Not long, 6 months. I'm thinking of finding another job.	没多久，六个月。我想找一份新（的）工作
<small>míngnián</small> Maybe 明年 when <small>wǒ</small> 我 complete <small>wǒde</small> 我的 accounting course	Maybe next year when I complete my accounting course	可能明年我修完会计课程之后
<small>wǒ yào qù chīfàn</small> But 我 要 去 吃饭	But I'm going for my dinner	不过我要去吃饭

¹ Usually the word 'station' is omitted.

English loanwords

The following are the common English loan words used in Singdarin.

English loanwords	Standard Mandarin words	Examples of usage
but	不过 / 但（是） / 可（是）	But 他很聪明! (But he's very clever!)
then	然后	Then, 他就来了! (Then he comes!)
actually	其实	Actually, 我本来要去的! (Actually, I wanted to go there!)
share	共享 / 分 / 分享	Eh! 蛋糕可以跟我share吗? (Can you share your cake with me?)
blur (Singlish)	搞不清楚状况 / 模糊不清	你知道吗? 他弄到我很blur! (Do you know he makes all at sea?)
anyway/anyhow	无论如何 / 不管怎（么）样	Anyway, 我一定要/该去! (Anyway, I must go!)
That's why	所以 / 于是	That's why 我很讨厌他! (That's why I hate him!)

Loanwords from other languages

Just like Singlish, certain words used in Singlish are also interchangeably used in Singdarin.

Loanwords	Standard Mandarin words	Definition	Notes	Example of usage
buay tahan	受不了	cannot tolerate	formed by combination of Hokkien word "beh 𠵿/袂" (cannot) and Malay word "tahan" (tolerate)	哇! 袂 tahan 咧! (wa, beh tahan leh!) [Wow, I cannot tolerate it!]
sibeh	非常	very/damn	originate from Teochew (死父, literally meaning dead father and hence in such a context, "on my dead father") and has the general meaning of 'damn'.	sibeh sian ! [Very boring!]
walao eh	我的天啊!	my gosh/oh my god	originate from Singaporean Hokkien vulgar word "wa lan eh 我𠵿呢/我𠵿呢" (literally 'my dick'). "Wa lau eh 我老呢" (literally 'my father') is a more polite variant of it.	Walao eh, 你怎么可以这样? [My god, how can you be like that?]
guai lan	令人讨厌的家伙	annoying/irritating person	originate from Singaporean Hokkien vulgar word "guai lan 怪𠵿/怪𠵿" (literally 'strange dick').	他sibeh guai lan的! [He is an annoying person!]
sua ku	井底之蛙	someone who has not been exposed to the society and is not well-informed about many things	from Hokkien word "suaku 山龟" (literally "tortoise on the mountain")	这个人很sua ku! [This guy is a tortoise on the mountain]
salah	错/坏掉了	incorrect/something went wrong	from Malay	计算机salah了! [Something went wrong with the computer]
ulu	偏僻	remote	from Malay	这个地方这么 ulu , 连一只鬼影都没有! [That place is very remote, not a single ghost (person) around!]
terok	难搞/困难	troublesome	from Malay	那位顾客sibeh terok ! [That customer is very troublesome!]
sibei jialat	非常(真假)麻烦	really difficult	from Hokkien	那个东西不懂被谁弄到乱七八糟, sibei jialat! [Somebody has made a huge mess of that thing, which makes things really difficult for us!]

Usage of English technical terms

Since English is the main working and educational language of Singapore, many Chinese Singaporeans are more familiar with the English professional terminology (technical terms) used at work, rather than that of Mandarin. This led to many Chinese Singaporeans tending to mix large number of English professional terms into Mandarin at work, instead of using Chinese technical terms. As such, a form of Singdarin spoken at work appears, resulting in some degree of communication barrier at work between the Chinese Singaporeans and the Chinese from China or Taiwan.

Comparison between Singdarin spoken at work in Singapore and Mandarin spoken at work in China is shown below:

Singdarin spoken at work in Singapore ^[4]	Mandarin spoken at work in China ^[4]	English translation
你的 cable tray 要从 ceiling 上走。	你的电线桥架要在吊顶天花板上铺设。	Your cable tray needs to be lined up along the ceiling
Server room 里面的 fire sprinkler 拆了, 你们的 fire department 会allow 吗?	机房里面的消防喷淋拆了, 你们的消防部门会批准吗?	If you dismantle the fire sprinkler inside the server room, will the fire department approve it?
今天 sibeh 热咧! Buay Tahan 啦!	今天的天气太热了! 我受不了了!	The weather today is too hot! It's unbearable!

Other terms associated with Singdarin

There are other terms associated with Singdarin such as "Broken Chinese", "Half-bucket" (半桶水) or "Half-past Six Chinese". These are the terms used by Singaporean Chinese-language professionals to refer to the mediocre (or low) proficiency level of [Standard Mandarin] amongst certain Chinese Singaporeans. The terms describe that when measured against Standard Mandarin, certain Chinese Singaporeans are only 50–65% proficient in Mandarin.

Part of the reason for this could be due to the widespread use of Singdarin in Singapore. Singdarin has led to the impression of "broken Chinese" or "bad Chinese", and is generally considered to be an adulterated form of Mandarin Chinese. Speaking Singdarin, for Singaporeans, is a natural linguistic habit derived from speaking a mixed language in daily life. However, the lower proficiency in formal Mandarin Chinese was mainly due to a lack of practice and exposure to more proper Chinese language, a lack of practice in speaking, hearing, reading and writing Chinese. This further led to a limited Chinese vocabulary or knowledge on Chinese cultural subjects, thus making it difficult for Singdarin speakers to speak Standard Mandarin fluently. Singdarin speakers will generally find it difficult to communicate (at a higher level) when attempting to interact with native Chinese speakers from China or Taiwan.

See also

- Chinese Singaporean
- Hokkien influence on Singaporean Mandarin
- Languages of Singapore
- Singaporean Hokkien
- Singaporean Mandarin
- Singlish
- Standard Singaporean Mandarin

References

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4. "新加坡式华语" (<https://archive.is/20120708171254/http://bbs.gd.gov.cn/thread-200238-1-1.html>). 联合早报网. Archived from the original (<http://bbs.gd.gov.cn/thread-200238-1-1.html>) on 8 July 2012. Retrieved 1 August 2010.

External links

- [Video Example of Singdarin](http://www.chinahistoryforum.com/index.php?/topic/26278-singdarin-anglo-chinese-language-for-singapore/) (<http://www.chinahistoryforum.com/index.php?/topic/26278-singdarin-anglo-chinese-language-for-singapore/>)
 - [Singaporean Mandarin Database](https://www.languagecouncils.sg/mandarin/en/learning-resources/singaporean-mandarin-database) (<https://www.languagecouncils.sg/mandarin/en/learning-resources/singaporean-mandarin-database>) - Promote Mandarin Council
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